



Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
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Scituate Middle School

SCITUATE

THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

November 19, 2004



School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)

The school accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Purpose and Limits of This Report

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Scituate Middle School from November 15 - 19, 2004.

The SALT visit report makes every effort to provide your school with a valid, specific picture of how well your students are learning. The report also portrays how the teaching in your school affects learning, and how the school supports learning and teaching. The purpose of developing this information is to help you make changes in teaching and the school that will improve the learning of your students. The report is valid because the team's inquiry is governed by a protocol that is carefully designed to make it possible for visit team members to make careful judgments using accurate evidence. The careful exercise of professional judgment makes the findings useful for school improvement because these judgments identify where the visit team thinks the school is doing well, and where it is doing less well.

The major questions the team addressed were:

How well do students learn at Scituate Middle School?

How well does the teaching at Scituate Middle School affect learning?

How well does Scituate Middle School support learning and teaching?

The following features of this visit are at the heart of the report:

Members of the visit team are primarily teachers and administrators from Rhode Island public schools. The majority of team members are teachers. The names and affiliations of the team members are listed at the end of the report.

The team sought to capture what makes this school work, or not work, as a public institution of learning. Each school is unique and the team has tried to capture what makes Scituate Middle School distinct.

The team did not compare this school to any other school.

When writing the report, the team deliberately chose words that it thought would best convey its message to the school, based on careful consideration of what it had learned about the school.

The team reached consensus on each conclusion, each recommendation, and each commendation in this report.

The team made its judgment explicit.

This report reflects only the week in the life of the school that was observed and considered by this team. The report is not based on what the school plans to do in the future or on what it has done in the past.

This school visit is supported by the Rhode Island Department of Education as a component of School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT). To gain the full advantages of a peer visiting system, RIDE deliberately did not participate in the active editing of this SALT visit report. That was carried out by the team's Chair with the support of Catalpa. Ltd.

The team closely followed a rigorous protocol of inquiry that is rooted in Practice-based Inquiry™ (Catalpa Ltd). The detailed *Handbook for Chairs of the SALT School Visit, 2nd Edition* describes the theoretical constructs behind the SALT visit and stipulates the many details of the visit procedures. The *Handbook* and other relevant documents are available at www.Catalpa.org. Contact Rick Richards at (401) 222-4600 x 2194 or ride0782@ride.ri.net for further information about the SALT visit protocol.

SALT visits undergo rigorous quality control. Catalpa Ltd. monitors each visit and determines whether the report can be endorsed. Endorsement assures the reader that the team and the school followed the visit protocol. It also assures that the conclusions and the report meet specified standards.

Sources of Evidence

The Sources of Evidence that this team used to support its conclusions are listed in the appendix.

The team spent a total of over 93 hours in direct classroom observation. Most of this time was spent in observing complete lessons or classes. Almost every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once. Additionally, the team spent a total of over 35 hours discussing the school with faculty, staff and school and district administrators.

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 28 hours in team meetings spanning the five days of the visit. This time does not include the time the team spent in classrooms, with teachers, and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators.

The team did agree by consensus that every conclusion in this report is:

- ◆ *Important enough to include in the report*
- ◆ *Supported by the evidence the team gathered during the visit*
- ◆ *Set in the present, and*
- ◆ *Contains the judgment of the team*

Using the Report

This report is designed to have value to all audiences concerned with how Scituate Middle School can improve student learning. However, the most important audience is the school itself.

How your school improvement team reads and considers the report is the critical first step. RIDE will provide a SALT Fellow to lead a follow-up session with the school improvement team to help start the process. With support from the Scituate School District School Improvement Coordinator and from SALT fellows, the school improvement team should carefully decide what changes it wants to make in learning, teaching, and the school, and amend its School Improvement Plan to reflect these decisions.

The Scituate School District, RIDE and the public should consider what the report says or implies about how they can best support Scituate Middle School as it works to strengthen its performance.

Any reader of this report should consider the report as a whole. A reader who only looks at recommendations misses important information.

2. PROFILE OF SCITUATE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Scituate Middle School was built in 1962, and a new core connecting the Middle and High Schools, which share the same campus, was added in 1995. The Middle School has been operating as a middle school since 2001. Beginning in 1997, the change process began to transform what was once Scituate Junior High School (grades 7 and 8) to Scituate Middle School (grades 6-8), according to Carnegie Turning Points recommendations. The Middle and High Schools share several classrooms, offices and facilities.

Scituate Middle School, serving grades 6-8, has a student population of 462. Ninety-five percent of the students are white, two percent are Asian, two percent are Hispanic and one percent is African-American. Twelve percent of the students are involved in special needs resource programs. Six percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

Students at Scituate Middle School are served by various teachers, administrators and support staff. The teaching staff comprises 38 full-time teachers, who teach on five interdisciplinary teams: one three teacher and one four teacher team in the sixth grade, one four teacher team in the seventh grade, one four member team in the eighth grade, and one four teacher team looping grades seven and eight. Four of these teachers also serve as content coordinators for the school. Six special educators, 10 unified arts teachers, a full-time physical education teacher, members of the High School physical education department and one reading teacher complete the teaching staff. Two guidance counselors (one full-time and one half-time), a student assistant counselor, school psychologist, a school nurse, resource officer and a part-time social worker also support the students and teachers at Scituate Middle School. There is a full-time principal for the Middle School and an assistant principal who is shared with the high school.

A variety of student, family and community programs and support services are offered at Scituate Middle School. Special needs students have access to a double English program, the Wilson Reading program and a social group for Asperger's and autistic students. There are several intervention structures available to teachers and students such as a multi-disciplinary team, a crisis management team and SAFE – a community substance abuse task force. Numerous interagency resources are also available including the West Bay Collaborative, Visiting Nurses, the Apple Valley Treatment Center and the Scituate Lion's Club. Additionally, several new programs are being implemented for the 2004-2005 school year: advisor/advisee, an after school program for at-risk students and a new Parent-Teacher Organization.

3. PORTRAIT OF SCITUATE MIDDLE SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Scituate Middle School is a thriving learning community. Students, parents, teachers, staff and administrators work collaboratively in this safe, clean, and well-kept school to achieve success for all. A culture of success permeates the school and is grounded upon high and consistent expectations.

Students at Scituate Middle School love their teachers and are proud to be part of this learning community. They are motivated to do well in school and actively engage in classroom activities. These enthusiastic learners set goals for themselves and work hard to meet them. Students are accepting of one another and treat their peers with tolerance and respect.

The teachers at Scituate Middle School are dedicated professionals who care about their students. Teachers help students set goals and provide them with clear expectations to guide their learning. They work with their colleagues and the school and district administrators to find solutions to meet the needs of their students. Like their students, teachers recognize the need to grow and develop their expertise.

Scituate Middle School is a close-knit community led by an engaging and charismatic principal. Students and teachers hold the principal in high regard and appreciate his supportive style of leadership. The principal encourages members of this community to talk to him, and they feel that he listens and responds to their concerns.

Several challenges confront Scituate Middle School. Space is at a premium. This limitation impacts not only instruction, but also best middle school practices. Issues arising from the connection to Scituate High School including scheduling, personnel and budget impede progress. Work to support all teachers to challenge their students appropriately and deliver the high quality education expected by all remains incomplete.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Conclusions

Most students at Scituate Middle School write well. They write often and in a variety of genres. This is borne out by the most recent results on the writing effectiveness subtest of the New Standards Reference Exam – 81% of students met or exceeded the standard. Students use the writing process effectively to complete their assignments; they pre-write and brainstorm ideas, complete rough drafts, peer and self-edit, develop final copies and often publish their work. Students learn to write well by taking structured notes, sharing their writing with their peers and teachers and reflecting upon their work. Students say that strategies such as the Praise, Question, Polish (PQP), common rubrics and graphic organizers help them write well. Using these tools, they know what is expected of them and how to organize their thoughts and improve their writing. Students practice their writing across the curriculum. For example, they write reports in physical education, explain their thinking when problem solving in math and English and write responses in music classes. Students also write in journals throughout the day for a variety of purposes and to improve their ability to write well. In classes where students are not interested in their writing topics, some do not challenge themselves to write effectively. Also, while students use conventions well, many need work in this area. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing school improvement plan)*

Many students read well enough to gain a basic understanding of what they have read and comprehend text successfully at a literal level. This is evident in the results for 2004 New Standards Reference Examination in which 72% met or exceeded the standard in the basic understanding subtest. These students read a variety of materials throughout the school day and at home. They know what is expected of them and are aware of the requirements for reading. Most students say that they like to read and understand its importance to help them do well in school. They know what their current reading levels are and how to set goals to improve their reading; they show determination to do so and are excited to note their progress. Students also readily use available support services and programs to improve their ability to read. Students know how to practice and improve their reading by discussing texts in literature circles, referencing texts to explain their thinking and making connections between their reading and their lives. They also effectively use their reading as a basis for their writing. However, quite a few students still struggle to read well and have difficulty analyzing and interpreting their reading. These students struggle to understand text at more than a literal level. Some students also say that reading is something they have to do to get good grades. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, meeting with students, school and district administrators, and parents, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing records of professional development activities, classroom textbooks, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

Most students at Scituate Middle School are effective and successful problem solvers. They identify problems, recognize the necessary steps to take, select appropriate strategies and develop solutions individually or in groups. Students develop their problem solving abilities when they conduct experiments with plants in science, develop floral arrangements in agriculture class and analyze and synthesize ancient law codes in social studies. These students learn problem solving strategies in math and other content areas and apply them throughout the school day. Students also use rubrics and regularly reflect on their work to improve their problem solving abilities. It is not surprising that 62% of the eighth graders met or exceeded the standard on the 2004 New Standards Reference Examination problem solving subtest. Students, who do not problem solve successfully, do not know what to do. They are often reluctant or afraid to struggle with challenging work and become disengaged and even frustrated in their classes. These students sometimes over-rely on more successful peers or their teachers to develop answers for them. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing records of professional development activities, classroom textbooks)*

Students love their teachers and are proud to be part of the Scituate Middle School community. They feel safe and comfortable and enjoy coming to school each day. Students treat one another with tolerance and respect and support one another in their learning. These enthusiastic learners set goals for themselves in many classes and work hard to meet their goals. Students know where to get help, seek it when they need it, are comfortable asking questions and appreciate the support available to them. Students say that their teachers and parents help contribute to their success by providing the structures and guidance they need. They also say that tools such as their student agendas, clear expectations from their teachers and classroom routines help them learn. Many students value the extracurricular activities such as department nights, support programs, school dances and sports, which make this school an enjoyable place to attend and learn. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students, teachers, parents, school administrators)*

Important Thematic Findings in Student Learning

- ◆ *Students know what is expected of them and are interested in learning.*
- ◆ *Students practice their skills and develop their learning in all their classes.*
- ◆ *Students set goals and work hard to meet them.*
- ◆ *Students understand the processes of reading, writing and problem solving.*
- ◆ *Some students are reluctant to challenge themselves or to struggle with challenging work.*

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING

Conclusions

The teachers at Scituate Middle School excel at teaching writing. Teachers stress the importance of writing by making writing a priority and embedding it across the curriculum. They inspire their students to use their creativity and imagination when they write. Teachers teach the writing process methodically and systematically by using graphic organizers, exemplars and common and consistent language. They also consistently review and model the elements of quality writing. They support their students by communicating clear expectations through the use of school-wide rubrics. They also teach students explicitly how to write for a variety of audiences and genres. Teachers help students become better writers by providing them with many opportunities to improve their writing including teacher conferences, PQPs, self-assessments and self-reflections. Teachers teach vocabulary to improve student writing. They expect students to use their new vocabulary as they revise previous assignments and complete future writings. Importantly, teachers incorporate content specific language into their writing and support and expect their students to do likewise. Despite this emphasis on teaching students to be effective writers, teachers focus less on the proper use of writing conventions. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, and school administrators, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, 2004 Rhode Island Writing Assessments, reviewing records of professional development activities)*

While teachers excel at teaching writing, they place less emphasis on teaching reading in their classes. Further, while some teachers effectively teach the reading of expository text in social studies, analyze magazine articles in science and physical education, and analyze and evaluate extended metaphors in stories and poems, other teachers do not explicitly teach reading or require students simply to read texts and answer questions. Students do read in all content areas, but they are not provided with sufficient opportunities or instruction in how to analyze and interpret text, make inferences and predictions and practice other critical thinking skills. These teachers over-rely on home and independent and “free-time” reading as the primary means in which reading is taught. This may help explain why 59% of the students did not achieve the standard on the 2004 New Standards Reference Examination subtest for reading analysis and interpretation. Effective and explicit reading instruction, however, does occur in the pull-out programs designed to support struggling readers. Students are taught to decode text, develop their stamina and increase their reading levels. At times, some classroom teachers also provide this intensive instruction. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing district strategic plan, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, classroom textbooks, reviewing records of professional development activities)*

Teachers succeed at a high level in teaching their students to problem solve. Teachers successfully transfer to their practice their conviction that problem solving is important by maintaining a focus on it as a teaching priority. Teachers recognize the importance of teaching students to problem solve, make it a focus of their teaching and succeed in this endeavor. They deliberately design their instruction and use common language to engage students in problem solving. Teachers teach students explicitly how to problem solve, reflect on their work, make revisions and try different strategies. Math teachers use the "A.W.E.SOME WORK" rubric across all classes to help their students understand and develop their problem solving abilities. Many teachers in all subject areas including unified arts and music use reading and writing activities, laboratory experiments, cooperative group work and creative projects to engage students in practicing and improving their problem solving strategies. Teachers also use common planning time to develop their expertise in the instruction of problem solving. Although teachers have done much in the area of problem solving, not all teachers provide the support, instruction and guidance needed to develop these abilities for all students. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, and district administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, talking with students and teachers, reviewing classroom textbooks, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing records of professional development activities)*

Teachers at Scituate Middle School go above and beyond what is expected of them to support one another and their students. The staff reports that teachers are "fueled by a passion for teaching." Parents and students alike say that teachers care about their students and have student learning as their central focus. Ninety-five percent of parents reported in the 2003 – 2004 SALT Survey that teachers care about their children. Teachers say that a strong sense of community permeates the school and helps develop a common culture for learning and success. Teachers are readily available before and after school hours and have an established schedule of department nights to help students. Teachers effectively use their common planning time to support one another and their students. They share their instructional strategies, identify areas in need of improvement and modify their schedules, when necessary. Teachers develop clear expectations and consistent routines that help all students achieve and succeed. Teachers work well together, trust one another and share resources and strategies to improve their skills and abilities. Teachers are flexible and work well with both their colleagues and the school administration. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, parents, school administrators, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing classroom assessments, 2004 SALT Survey report, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

While many teachers differentiate their instruction in their classes, not all teachers succeed in doing this. Teachers provide different versions of tests and classroom assignments, they have varying requirements for group and individual projects and they provide students with different levels of work based on their ability. Teachers who successfully challenge their students also effectively use rubrics to help guide their students to be successful and do their personal best. However, not all teachers effectively challenge all students. Despite previous professional development in this area, teachers say that they need more help to meet the needs of all students. In the 2003 - 2004 SALT Survey, teachers prioritized that they want more training in enrichment activities, gifted programming and strategies for teaching a broad range of abilities in the same classroom. Parents also report concerns that not all of their students are appropriately challenged in school. Students express similar concerns. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, and district administrators, and parents, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2004 SALT Survey report, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing records of professional development activities)*

Commendations for Scituate Middle School

Clear expectations and consistent routines

Teacher excellence in the teaching of writing

Caring and dedicated staff who work collaboratively

Strong sense of community and a culture for learning

Problem solving throughout the school

Recommendations for Scituate Middle School

Focus more on teaching writing conventions.

Find more time for reading instruction, specifically in the area of analysis and interpretation.

Develop the capacity of all teachers to teach problem solving effectively to all students.

Participate in further training to challenge and meet the needs of all students.

Continue to encourage students to read independently.

Continue to support struggling readers with explicit reading instruction.

Continue to provide students with clear expectations and goal setting.

Recommendations for Scituate School Department

Continue to support teachers in their efforts to obtain professional development.

Continue to work with the middle school to support intervention programs designed to assist struggling and at-risk students.

6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

Conclusions

Scituate Middle School has a strong culture for learning and a sense of community that encompasses everyone. The entire staff feels appreciated and valued. There is an overall commitment to carry out the school's mission and vision as embodied in the school improvement plan. Open lines of communication run from the district administrators through the school administrators, teachers and students. Although school teams work hard to communicate with families, the school recognizes a need to improve home-school communication and plans to implement a viable PTO to help in this area. Teachers, staff and students say the school principal is very approachable. He value their opinions and provides strong and effective leadership. District administrators say the principal is a "rising star" and that he has tremendous capacity to take on new information and implement new initiatives. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, parents, school administrators, 2004 SALT Survey report, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

Scituate Middle School is a thriving learning community that has outgrown its current location. Many of the components that comprise an effective middle school, though present, are not fully implemented due to a significant lack of space. Pervasive overcrowding of hallways, sharing of staff and facilities between the middle school and high school, as well as a lack of lockers for the sixth graders are directly related to the current facility. Teachers say that, while they "make do," the severe space limitation impedes their ability to teach their students. Teacher and student access to computer labs and the library is limited due to space constraints and scheduling conflicts. Special education classes and staff offices are housed in inadequate rooms the size of closets. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, school administrators, 2004 SALT Survey report, District Long Range School Facilities Planning document, January 2004)*

Scituate Middle School educators make every effort to embrace best middle school practices. They use common planning time to support teaching and learning. This common planning time allows them to improve teaching and discuss how to meet the needs of their students. Teachers and school administrators report the need for more time within teams and among departments to allow them to analyze student work, develop interdisciplinary units and team teach. While teachers use the time in a very productive manner, the amount of time available limits further focus on the integration and development of the curriculum. The principal reports that a flexible schedule is needed to allow for longer blocks of instructional time and to conduct an advisor/advisee program. However, the high school schedule, the shared staff and the music department drive and limit the middle school schedule. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, school administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, discussing student work with teachers, 2004 SALT Survey report, reviewing district and school policies and practices, reviewing records of professional development activities)*

Teachers and administrators admirably recognize the need to improve their teaching and school continually. They work hard to accomplish this and have developed a culture of learning that permeates the school and district and is exemplified by the extensive professional development available to all. This professional development is on-going and comprehensive. Most teachers take advantage of these opportunities to help them develop and improve their craft. Classes are offered on site for teachers to audit or to take for graduate credit at a nominal fee. Recent topics include content literacy, differentiated instruction and math literacy. Not only do outside programs come in, but faculty and administrators provide training for one another and for other districts. Some examples include analyzing student work, Internet use and critical friends training. Still, teachers report an additional need for professional development to differentiate their instruction effectively for all learners in heterogeneous classrooms. This continuous dedication to learning attests to the teachers' commitment to both their learning and their students' success. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, reviewing records of professional development activities, 2004 SALT Survey report, meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, talking with teachers and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing school improvement plan, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing district and school policies and practices, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing district strategic plan, Agreement between Scituate School Committee and the Scituate Teachers' Association September 2002-August 2005)*

In addition to space limitations, Scituate Middle School has insufficient critical resources, which interferes with teaching and learning. The need to share resources with the connected high school further compounds this problem. These resources include the library, computer labs, budget and supplies. The library does not meet the needs of the school in terms of access, staffing and available books and resources. While there are four computer labs between the two schools, two are often in disrepair, and one is dedicated to the art department, leaving teachers only one lab they can use, and that lab is available only two periods a day. The 2003-2004 SALT Survey report shows that 41% of the students indicate that they spend no time during the school day using a computer, and 51% indicate that they spend less than one hour a day. The budgetary process, in addition to not providing the middle school with the autonomy it needs to determine its priorities, does not adequately fund instructional resources for all content areas. Some teachers also report that basic instructional supplies like dry erase markers, student folders and current textbooks are in short supply. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, school administrators, 2004 SALT Survey report, classroom textbooks, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

Commendations for Scituate Middle School

The open lines of communication
Extensive professional development
Effective use of common planning time
Rich school-wide culture of learning
Committed faculty, staff, and administrators

Recommendations for Scituate Middle School

Continue to advocate for a new middle school facility.
Continue to advocate for a flexible schedule that supports middle school best practices.
Provide additional professional development for differentiated instruction.
Provide additional time for common planning time.
Work with the content leaders to help them navigate the budget process.
Continue to support the strong culture for learning and teaching.
Continue efforts to strengthen family involvement and communication

Recommendations for Scituate School Department

Continue to work with the school community to build a new middle school.
Work with the middle school to develop a flexible schedule that supports middle school best practices.
Reorganize the budgeting process to allow for autonomy at the middle school.
Provide adequate funding for technology and needed instructional resources.
Support the middle school plans for additional common planning time.
Continue to support professional development.
Continue to maintain open lines of communication with the middle school.

7. FINAL ADVICE TO SCITUATE MIDDLE SCHOOL

What an exciting place Scituate Middle School is! You are doing a fine job of creating a community and culture that are conducive to learning.

Embrace the culture of learning that exists and is growing here. Continue to promote and implement best middle school practices. Be proud of this vibrant culture, and keep working together to ensure that your students receive an excellent and comprehensive education.

Continue to advocate for a new facility, professional development, resources and technological support that you and your students justly deserve. Maintain your current educational values, and provide more reading instruction and differentiation that challenges all learners.

You do a great job with what you have been given. Enjoy your caring community of learners, and use your strengths to continue to grow and flourish. You have all of the elements of a top notch school and are on the brink of greatness. With a new facility, the sky's the limit.

ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

Scituate Middle School

November 19, 2004

Catalpa Ltd. monitors all SALT visits and examines each SALT visit team report to determine whether it should be endorsed as a legitimate SALT report. The endorsement decision is based on procedures and criteria specified in *Endorsing SALT Visit Team Reports*. (available on Catalpa website). Catalpa Ltd. bases its judgment about the legitimacy of a report on these three questions:

Did the SALT visit team and the host school conduct the visit in a manner that is reasonably consistent with the protocol for the visit?

Do the conclusions of the report meet the tests for conclusions specified in the visit protocol (important, accurate, set in present, shows the team's judgment)?

Does the report meet the tests for a report as specified in the visit protocol (fair, useful, and persuasive of productive action)?

Using the answers to these questions, the final decision to endorse the report answers the overall endorsement question: Is this a legitimate SALT team visit report? In order to make this determination, Catalpa weighs all the questions and issues that have been raised to decide whether a report is legitimate or not. While it is possible that a challenge related to one of the three questions listed above would be serious enough to withhold or condition the endorsement, it is more likely that issues serious enough to challenge a report's legitimacy will cut across the three questions.

While the SALT visit protocol requires that all SALT visits are conducted to an exceptionally high standard of rigor, visits are "real-life" events; it is impossible to control for all unexpected circumstances that might arise. The protocol for the conduct of the visit is spelled out in the *Handbook for SALT Visit Chairs*, 1st edition.

Since unexpected circumstances might result in either the team or the school straying too far from the protocol for a visit, Catalpa monitors both the school and the team during a visit regarding the conduct of the visit.

Most often actual visit events or issues do not challenge a report's legitimacy and Catalpa's monitoring and endorsement is routine. A district administrator, principal, faculty member or parent may not like a report, or think it is too negative, or think the visit should have been conducted in a manner that is not consistent with the protocol. None of these represent a challenge to a report's legitimacy; concerns that might challenge an endorsement are based on events that stray too far from the protocol.

The Catalpa review of this visit and this report was routine.

The steps Catalpa completed for this review were:

- discussion with the chair about any issues related to the visit before it began
- daily discussion of any issues with the visit chair during the visit
- observation of two portions of the visit
- discussion with the principal regarding any concerns about the visit at the time of the visit
- thorough review of the report in both its pre-release and final version form

The findings from the review are:

1. This team was certified to meet team membership requirements by RIDE staff.
2. This report was produced by a legitimate SALT Visit that was led by a trained SALT Visit Chair and conducted in a manner that is consistent with SALT Visit procedures.
3. The conclusions are legitimate SALT visit conclusions.
4. The report is a legitimate SALT visit report.

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD
Catalpa Ltd.
December 4, 2004

REPORT APPENDIX

Sources of Evidence for This Report

In order to write this report the team examined test scores, student work, and other documents related to this school. The school improvement plan for Scituate Middle School was the touchstone document for the team. No matter how informative documents may be, however, there is no substitute for being at the school while it is in session—in the classrooms, in the lunchroom, and in the hallways. The team built its conclusions primarily from information about what the students, staff, and administrators think and do during their day. Thus, this visit allowed the team to build informed judgments about the teaching, learning, and support that actually takes place at Scituate Middle School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following sources of evidence:

- ◆ *direct classroom observation*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following eight students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *meeting at scheduled times with the following groups:*
 - teachers*
 - school improvement team*
 - school and district administrators*
 - students*
 - parents*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *analyzing state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*
 - district and school policies and practices*
 - Scituate Middle School Faculty Handbook, September 2004*
 - Scituate Middle School, Documents for Review, folders 1 and 2*
 - Scituate Middle School Team binders*
 - District Long-Range Schools Facilities Planning document, January 2004*
 - Scituate School Department Curriculum guides*
 - records of professional development activities*
 - classroom assessments*
 - school improvement plan for Scituate Middle School*
 - district strategic plan*
 - Agreement between Scituate School Committee and the Scituate Teachers'*

Association, September 2002-August 2005

2003 - 2004 SALT Survey report

classroom textbooks

2003 Information Works!

2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries

School and District Report Cards

State Assessment Results for Scituate Middle School

Assessment results create pieces of evidence that the visit team uses as it conducts its inquiry. The team uses this evidence to shape its efforts to locate critical issues for the school. It also uses this evidence, along with other evidence, to draw conclusions about those issues.

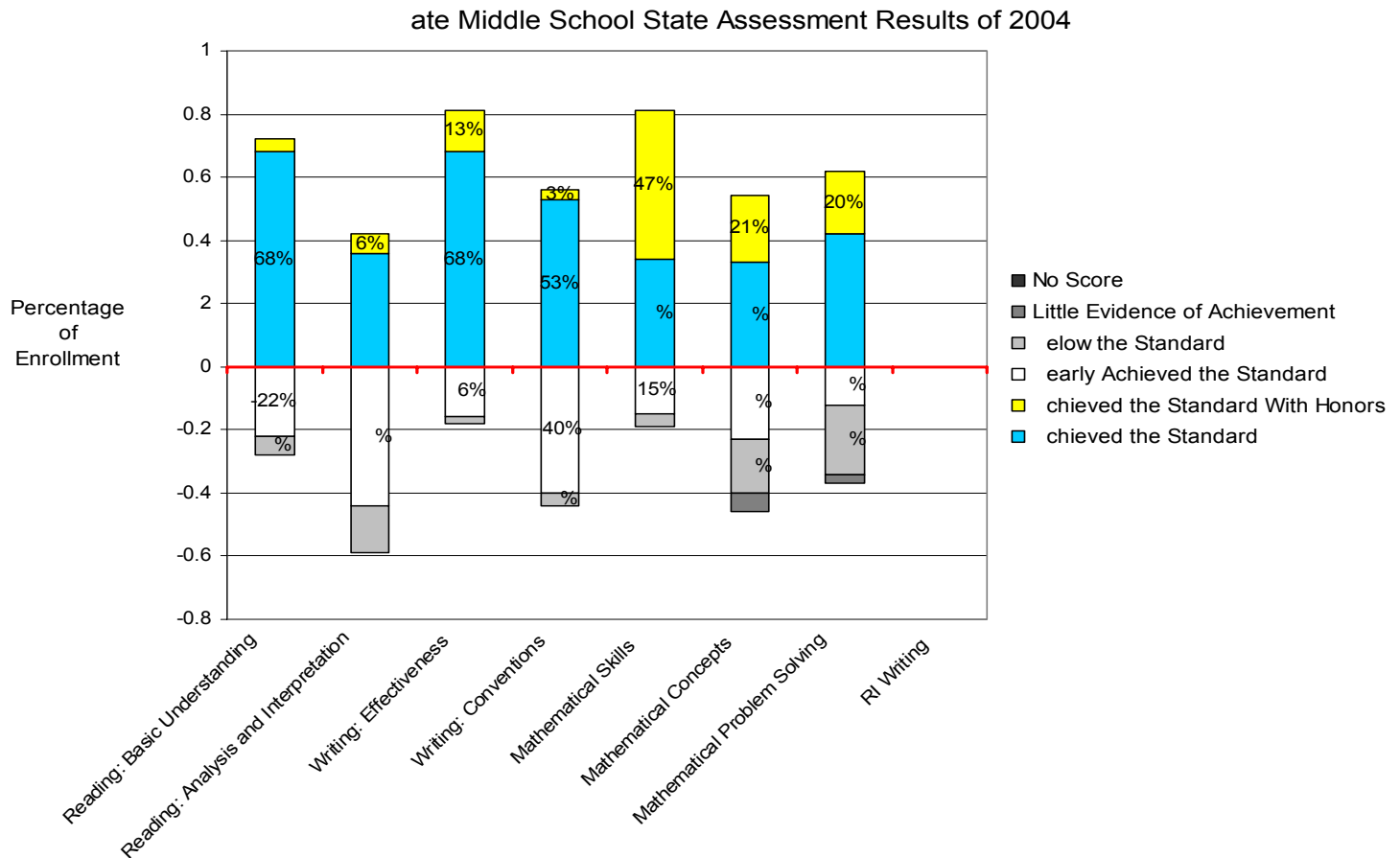
This school's results are from the latest available state assessment information. It is presented here in four different ways:

- ◆ *against performance standards;*
- ◆ *compared to similar students in the state;*
- ◆ *across student groups within the school;*
- ◆ *and over time.*

RESULTS IN RELATION TO PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The first display shows how well the students do in relation to standards in English/Language Arts and mathematics. Student results are shown as the percentage of students taking the test whose score places them in the various categories at, above, or below the performance standard. Endorsed by the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education in 1998, the tested standards can be found in the publication *New Standards Performance Standards*.

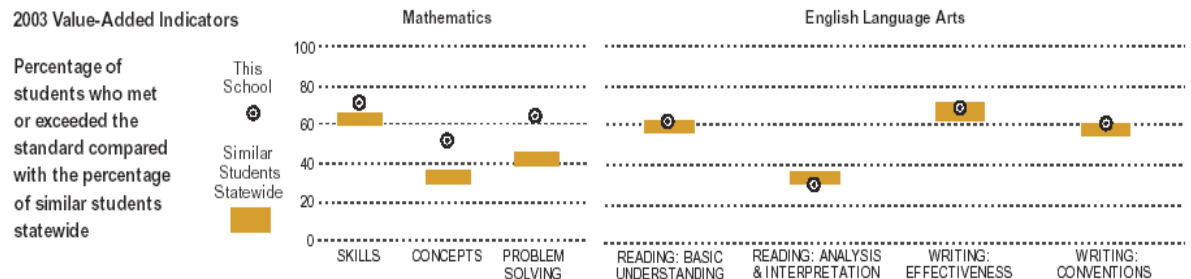
Table 1. 2003-2004 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments



RESULTS COMPARED TO SIMILAR STUDENTS IN THE STATE

This chart includes the performance levels of students with special education needs, students participating in ESL or bilingual programs, low socio-economic status (a composite of income level, racial background and parental education), as well as the performance of students with none of these characteristics. Taking all these characteristics into account, the graph displays the overall performance of students in this school compared to - a group of students from across the state whose characteristics match this school's students.

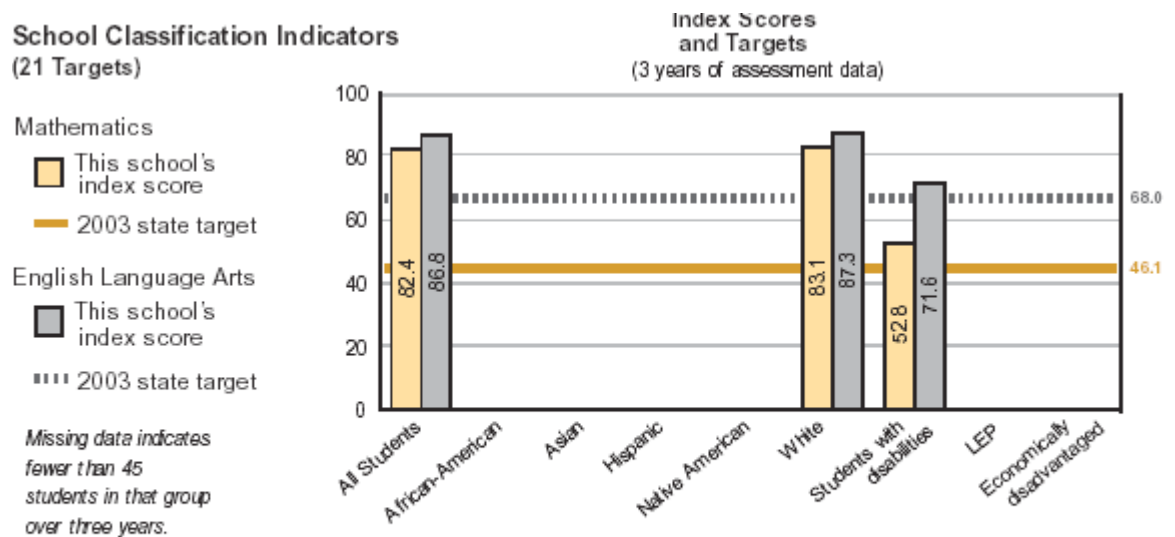
Table 2. 2001-2002 Student Results in Comparison to Similar Students Statewide



RESULTS ACROSS STUDENT GROUPS WITHIN THE SCHOOL

An important way to display student results is across different groups of students who are in the school. This display shows targets and index scores and reflects the new requirements of the No Child Left Behind federal legislation. Since breaking students into these smaller groups can result in groups becoming too small to show accurate results, this display shows groups with 45 or more students across three years of testing. Any student group whose index scores do not meet the targets set by RIDE require additional attention to close its performance gaps.

Table 3. 2002-2003 Student Results across Subgroups



Index scores range from 0 to 100. They are based on the performance levels of all students in both English language arts and mathematics, for all subtests, over three years. For further detail, see the 2003 School Reports Cards at www.ridoe.net.

REPORT CARD FOR SCITUATE MIDDLE SCHOOL

This 2003 Report Card shows the performance of Scituate Middle School compared to the school's annual measurable objectives (AMO).

These report card scores describe Scituate Middle School as a high performing and sustaining school.

Table 4. Report Card for Scituate Middle School

Information Works! data for Scituate Middle School is available at <http://www.rido.net>.

THE SCITUATE MIDDLE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Dr. Lawrence Filippelli
Principal
School Improvement Chairperson

Susan Bryant
Parent

Dawn Faraone
Parent

Jane Franklin
Parent

Lee Fazio
Teacher

Janine Hesford
Parent

Debbie Kintzing
Teacher

Deborah LaTour
Teacher

Rebecca Limoges
Teacher

Robin McKeon
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